

~~SECRET/NOFORN/NOCONTRACT/ORCON~~INR WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS
OF DEVELOPMENTS IN HUMAN RIGHTS

No. 120, August 24, 1979

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LATIN AMERICA

3.5(c)

Argentina

Reaction to US Statements. Remarks by the Department's spokesman regarding police raids on human rights organizations and US concern about reports of clandestine prisoners have provoked angry responses from Argentine officialdom. On August 20, Foreign Ministry officials delivered a formal protest to Ambassador Castro, labeling the Department's comments on the police raids as "inadmissible and imprudent." The protest, however, was delivered in a manner indicating that the Argentines were concerned about preserving the positive tone in bilateral relations established during Secretary Vance's recent conversation with Foreign Minister Pastor in Quito.

On August 21, the Argentine tone changed dramatically as an enraged Foreign Minister Pastor demanded Ambassador Castro's explanation for the Department's comments on clandestine prisoners. Pastor warned that a more strident official protest may be in the offing and said he feared that a strong wave of anti-US sentiment was building in official, public, and media circles. (CONFIDENTIAL, Buenos Aires 6782, August 20; 6803, August 21)

INR Comment: The atmosphere created by these bilateral exchanges unfortunately coincides with press reports that the IAHRIC may present a "preliminary report" on its Argentine visit (September 6-20) to the OAS General Assembly that opens in La Paz on October 22. The prospect of such a maneuver, which would constitute a significant departure from established IAHRIC procedures, will upset the Argentines, who do not expect their human rights situation to be on the agenda in La Paz. Unless the rumor about a "preliminary report" is put to rest in the current heated atmosphere, pressure could mount for a last-minute postponement or cancellation of the IAHRIC visit. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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